
SYSTEMATIC CHARITY.

BY

D. A. O'SULLIVAN, ESQUIRE,

BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

Paper read before the Canadian Institute, January, 1885.

SYSTEMATIC CHARITY.

BY D. A. O'SULLIVAN, ESQ.

Barrister-at-Law.

Every large city in the world has a destitute population ranging probably about five per cent. of the whole number of its inhabitants. There are the poor who are unable to work, the poor who are unwilling to work, and the poor without work for them to do.

The first of these classes include the sick, the aged, the deformed, and those who, whatever their disposition may be, are unfit to support themselves. They form the great mass of any city's permanent poor, and they are the ones towards whom the energies of the charitable and the actions of the Legislature are directed.

The second—and an alarmingly increasing class—furnish the pauper and the tramp of modern civilization, and it is said on the authority of a very experienced writer that "the pauper, the imposter, and the fraud of every description carry off at least one-half of all charity, public and private, and hence there is a constant and deplorable waste in the alms-funds of every large city."

The third class of poor, able and willing to work, but without work to do, is a fluctuating class, absent in one city and present in another, and varying also in seasons in the same city. They form the lower order of working classes; if work is provided for them they may arrive at a higher level, if not they become depauperized and are the scandal of society.

I have divided the poor whom the taxpayer and the charitable have to support into three classes, with reference to their capacity or inclination for work—for labor of some kind; but there are others with whom the public are concerned, such as the criminal of minor offences, who is kept in gaol or in prison at the public expense; the drunkard, who finds his way to the same institutions, and a large miscellaneous class who, by reason of vice that is a legal crime, or vice that may not be such, are maintained in the hospitals and infirmaries and magdalen asylums, and whose children are to be found in the various institutions from the infants' and children's

homes till they are ripe for a repetition of the vices and career of their parents.

The social and economic problems in regard to the poor are neither few nor simple of solution. What is to be done for the honest poor who desire to better their condition? and what remedies can be offered to repress the degrading process by which a poor man becomes a pauper? How, in fact, can the worthy poor be enabled to help themselves, and how can the pauper and the tramp be exterminated? The task of maintaining the helpless is a very small one compared with the tax to maintain the idle and the undeserving. The rate-payer and the charitable have to support not only themselves but the poor and destitute of every kind, and it is important to them to aid in any effort towards the co-operation and efficiency of our charities.

Charity comes to be administered within a score or so of institutions in cities like Toronto, and so far as indoor relief or assistance is concerned there is not so great a necessity for any organized co-operation. The waste and abuse and imposture is chiefly in regard to outdoor relief, and it is all the more in those cities where no well organized association of charities exist. It is of this organization of alms-giving that I propose to treat principally in this paper.

Within the last seven years 36 charity organizations have sprung up in the United States, and it is on the experience of the workings of these institutions that I propose to direct your attention. I have preferred relying upon the reports of charities in those cities having so many features in common with our own, and so have not gone into the workings of any other foreign charities. The *Monthly Register*, of Philadelphia, collects information from all quarters, and is the official journal for a large number of charity organizations. It is obvious that wherever a Poor Law system prevails there would be fewer materials for our guidance in organizations than where no legislation is required for their efficient working.

The principles upon which American charity organizations are founded are very simple and very well understood.

A charity organization does not mean one mere charitable society. "It means," in the language of Mr. Kellogg, the organizing Secretary of the Associated Charities of New York City, "an alliance offensive for economy, thoroughness and efficiency of all such organizations of public official relief, and of congregational and individual

beneficence, into one harmonious and co-operative body, maintaining intercourse and comparison through one central agency, and pledged to united and concurrent efforts for the suppression of the pauper and the rescue of the deserving poor."

It means a common field in which men of all beliefs and men of no belief can work side by side in the cause of humanity. It means an examination into the cases of individual destitution by a personal canvas, and it means a thorough investigation of every applicant, so as to detect and expose imposture, and is, therefore, a comparison and exchange of information in confidence.

This central agency or bureau does not interfere in any way with the workings of the existing charities. It gives no relief except in rare, urgent cases. It excludes no worthy applicant, and it frowns down any attempt at proselytism. It aims to prevent imposture, to reduce vagrancy and pauperism, to relieve the destitute, and to give relief in return for employment. It has its agencies, its branch offices, its paid and volunteer officers, and as efficient a system of registration as possible.

This last—a registration of the names of all in the city in receipt of private or official relief—is not only one of the first things insisted upon, but it will be noticed in comparing the reports for different years that it is considered of very increasing importance. The report from Baltimore (and I quote the latest issued) says that the charity directory has already proved of valuable assistance. In Brooklyn, Boston, Detroit, and many other cities, a map is prepared, the names of applicants collected as far as possible, and a list of those obtaining relief from the circle of charities in the city.

The manner in which this was done in Buffalo is a fair example of what can be done with little expense. "Circulars were sent to all church societies, relief societies, benevolent societies and fraternities, and to all asylums and hospitals, asking for particulars as to their mode of operation, the kind of relief given, &c. Then the books of the Poor-master's office were copied, and shortly after, through the kindness of the Superintendent of Police, blanks were delivered at every house in the city by the police, asking for full particulars of any relief that any citizen was giving at that time to any poor person or pensioner. These forms were collected by the police twenty-four hours after delivery, and out of some 30,000 issued, some 3,000 were returned filled in." "And this," says the

very able writer on the subject of Charity Organization, the Rev. Mr. Gurteen, "our first work of registering the names of all in the city in receipt of relief, whether official or private, was begun." Books were then opened for indoor and outdoor relief, and classified as public or private, and the information methodically arranged, with the names in alphabetical order. It was found that the same person, in some cases, was in receipt of relief from three or four different societies, from a dozen different individuals, and from one or more churches, besides being on the poor books. "It was a lesson," he adds, "Buffalo will never forget."

The Secretary of the Brooklyn Bureau of Charities says: "The value of the registry system is now proved by actual test in the principal cities of the country. The system in some form is indispensable to the intelligent administration of charity." * * * "A complete registry is the only adequate check upon those who subsist upon alms fraudulently obtained."

"In New York," Mr. Kellogg says, "we should feel ourselves powerless without it, and the bulk of the large relief societies would feel that its abandonment was a long step backward." There are 195,000 persons in the New York Registers.

One reason why this is insisted upon—and a number of other authorities could be cited—is that it corrects abuses in the outdoor relief. The tendency of outdoor relief, it is said, is demoralizing. Detroit officially reports in favour of its abolition. Brooklyn and Philadelphia have made it illegal. New York gives no outdoor relief, except to the adult blind. Buffalo has taken the same view, and great savings are reported in cities where the organizations are complete, or where outdoor relief is entirely abolished, as in Brooklyn and Philadelphia. To reduce imposture is to reduce vagrancy, and in this knowledge is really power. To know that one person is deserving and another is not, is not only to be in the way of effectual alms-giving, but it is a saving of expense and an encouragement to the relieved.

On all points of view every aim of methodical charity is assisted, strengthened and sustained for good by the completeness of its registration; registration of those who ought to be relieved, whether they ask it or not, and registration of those who ought not, no matter how or where they apply for relief.

The other features of the American, or as it might be called,

"The Buffalo Plan" of Organizing Charities, do not need especial mention. No good would be done by attempting to interfere with the existing charities, and every one would deprecate any attempt at proselytism. Charity, in this human aspect of it, as well as on the Divine side, should exclude no person, or body of persons, on account of religious creed, politics or nationality. Such an organization requires but little funds, as the rule is to give no alms. If it can direct where alms should be given and where withheld, a great good will have been accomplished. Its funds are intended to be used solely in payment of such paid officials as may be necessary. In Boston, with a population of about half a million, the expenses of the associated charities are in the neighbourhood of \$13,000, but they have 25,000 people on their books, and received reports from 47 charitable societies and 571 private individuals, and employ about 600 paid agents. Last year the central office received over 30,000 reports, and sent out about half that number. In Philadelphia, with a larger population, about 1,000 or over are employed, and the expenses are very much less, only about \$4,000. In Buffalo the expenses of the first year were \$6,700, and it is claimed that there was a saving to the ratepayers in that year of the sum of \$48,000.

The task of seeing that all deserving cases of destitution are properly relieved is, of course, one of the greatest aims of these associated charities. This is effected by a network of agencies throughout the city, at the headquarters of which the chief officer has a list of charities and a report of the person to be relieved. The visitors make a recommendation to the proper charity in order to obtain relief. This is not a thing to be done in a day or a year, and I notice that while the early reports recommend that all officers of the organizations be paid—that there be no sentiment but all business in the matter—some of them now admit that to have been an error; that volunteer charity is, when it can be got, the right sort of charity. This would not, however, apply to the central office, which is open all day, and where a complete register of every case of relief is to be had. In communication with this central office, and revolving around it, as it were, are the district committees, and with these the use of volunteers is not only desirable but imperative. The work could not be carried on otherwise. The usual support given to the poor, the encouragement to elevate their home life, their health,

and their habits are matters for the benevolent citizen who can snatch a half hour in the week for that purpose, and comes all the better from him than from the official representative of charity.

Indeed the associated charities must do good in this direction, or do very little at all, as they are not organized to relieve the poor by giving alms, but to enquire into the cases of deserving poor and thus aid the existing charities, and secondly, to help the poor to help themselves. So long as real misery exists or is skilfully counterfeited, so long will the charitable hand out their money on the street or in their offices, no matter how many charities there may be around them. The association of charities is opposed to this thoughtless or indiscriminate giving. An English clergyman, speaking of his experience in the terrible winter of 1867-'8 in the east end of London, says that out of every shilling ticket he had given he had done four pennyworth of good to eight pennyworth of harm—the 4d. representing the bread which had gone into the mouths of a wretched population, the 8d. the premium which was given to their wasteful, indolent habits. Immediately after the experience of these times a society was started in London called the "Charity Organization Society," and it gives no relief (except in the extreme cases of despair or imminent death) without previous and searching examination. At its head is the Bishop of London; and men like Cardinal Manning, Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Ruskin, the Earl of Shaftesbury and the Duke of Norfolk are amongst its officers.

One of the aims of a charity organization calls for special mention. The basis of relief is employment in all cases where work can be got, and where the applicant is able to work. This is easier to discuss in theory than to reduce to practice. One thing has, however, been noticed. Whenever work was obtainable the applications for relief fell off. In many cities the procuring of work is put on a commercial basis as they say; in many the civic authorities provide employment. In Baltimore it is made a substantive charity called the Provident Wood Yard. When a man professed a willingness to work and work could not be provided, it was cruel to dismiss him as undeserving. Any man making a proper application is provided with living wages until something better can be found for him. Tickets for this purpose are with the charitable societies and the police. When the managers of a Boston charity attached thereto a wood yard, and announced that relief would be given to no able-

bodied man unless willing to do a certain amount of work, the daily number of applicants fell off at once from 160 to 49, and Mr. Gurteen adds that in every city in which the test has been applied it has been eminently successful. In Philadelphia, when an able-bodied mendicant after an offer of such a ticket refuses to send to the office for relief, the police are called upon to arrest him.

As evidences of the assistance given to the public and to the existing charities, it is reported that in Buffalo, for example, street begging is effectually done away with. In another American city the assistance given towards repressing imposture is officially stated at a decrease of 58 per cent. in the number of vagrants and 73 per cent. in the number of undeserving poor.

Even on the low ground—but one not to be forgotten—of a pecuniary saving, very complimentary figures could be given. In London in ten years the cost of maintaining the poor has been reduced 30 per cent., and in some of the American cities to more than double that proportion.

These associated charities advise the public to give no money to any applicant, but to send the applicant to their central office, where his case will be considered and attended to. If he can work and if he refuse to work, he gets nothing; and it requires no comment to shew that private charity is almost always unable to detect this unwillingness. The money given to such a person is worse than thrown away. It is an encouragement to pauperism. It is not an agreeable task for the charitably disposed to encounter these applicants and to be never absolutely certain that their offering is not squandered on the most worthless of characters. The organized charities say, We can manage these things better, and what is a trespass on your time is our employment and duty.

These charitable organizations say, in the second place: visit the poor, give your information, your assistance, to find out and detect fraud, and to ascertain who are really deserving of relief, but give your money to the existing charities. The lame and the cripple, not to speak of the man with the seven helpless children, and no fire in the house for days, are frequently found to have amassed great sums of money by begging. And this art is so profitable that it seems to be worth acquiring. An advertisement is said to have appeared in a London paper, where the art of begging is taught exhaustively in six lessons by a person who has founded a college for that purpose.

He had an assortment of professional appliances, artificial wounds, trained dogs for the blind, crutches, and could direct his students to the most lucrative streets and neighbourhoods.

Whilst the existing charitable institutions and societies are not at all interfered with by these organizations, they are assisted and protected by them. It has been said that a knowing tramp in this city of Toronto, with its churches and its two dozen of charitable institutions, could put in the winter very well, and if detected too early, could easily earn the sixty days that would entitle him to free quarters in the gaol. The church societies are largely imposed upon also, and in the many cases of slender stipends of the clergymen the imposition is outrageous. The charity of all is much greater than the good done to the recipients of it, and whilst an association, such as we have been describing, may not remedy everything, it might do a vast deal of good.



ds,
to
at
ro-
city
stu-
ly,
ree
on
he
an
ch
ht